

**Magnifying Jesus**  
**Fourth Sunday in Advent**  
**Fourth in a Series Sermons, “Getting Christmas Right”**  
**December 18, 2022**  
**Micah 5:2-5a and Luke 1:46-56**

*Micah 5: And he shall stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the Lord, and they shall dwell secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth. And he shall be their peace.*

*Luke 1 - My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant. For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed; for he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name.*

Dear Friends in Christ,

There are at least two mindsets with which we might approach Christmas, and life in general. The first is to go wandering through life tossed to and fro by the winds and waves of life’s storms. The second is to dwell securely in the knowledge that Christ is that Shepherd standing in the midst of His flock and that God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

The first is to be shaken to our core by unplanned pregnancies, unexpected expenses, and unwelcome illnesses. The second is to dwell securely in the beauty of the Christmas story which centers around two unplanned pregnancies, unexpected trials, and unwelcome detours.

The first is to magnify what is wrong in our lives, or to say it another way, stumble into a habit to make mountains out of molehills. The second is to develop the habit of magnifying our Savior, or to say it another way, to go through life with our eyes and ears and hearts and souls and minds fixed on Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith.

In today’s familiar story of Mary making the 70 mile journey from Nazareth to the hill country near Jerusalem to visit her elderly cousin, we would not be surprised if both Mary and Elizabeth were to be rendered speechless. Both of their pregnancies were scientifically and medically impossible. It would have been tempting for them to make the story about themselves and their good fortune. But in fact, both of them were quick to make the story about the greatness of God. Elizabeth

exclaimed with a loud cry how blessed Mary was and how blessed the fruit of her womb was and how blessed she was to be visited by the mother of Yahweh.

And Mary was quick to put the magnifying glass where it belonged, on the one true God of Israel who was in the process of doing great things for her. She went public with the most private thoughts of her heart. And in so doing, she gives us a terrific example of how to get Christmas right. Last week, we saw that getting Christmas right is to be rejoicing always, the week before that repenting sincerely, and the week before that monitoring closely. Today, our theme is “Magnifying Jesus.”

Three attributes of God Mary would put the spotlight on this morning. 1) God’s sight, 2) God’s strength, and 3) God’s speech.

### ***• God’s Sight***

***And Mary said, “My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant. For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed; for he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name.***

A story is told of Muritus, a wandering scholar in Italy during the Middle Ages. On one occasion, he fell ill and woke up to find himself lying in a hospital bed in a poor and run down hospital. He had been placed in a unit where doctors were speaking in Latin about his case. They were assuming that he was a worthless and homeless vagabond, and that he could use him for medical experiments. But, in fact, he was highly educated, he could understand the language, he responded in impeccable Latin, ***“Call no man worthless for whom Christ died.”***

The scholars could only see a failure of a man deserving of death, but God sees in every human being, with no exceptions, a person for Whom Christ died. The people of Nazareth saw Mary as an ordinary girl pregnant out of wedlock and deserving of scorn and perhaps worse. But God saw in her a woman worthy to bear and nurture and raise up a man who would be Savior of the world.

There are two ways to magnify a thing, right? You can magnify it with a microscope, which is to take something small and make it look big. Or you can use a telescope, which is to take something that is big and see it as it really is. When Mary magnifies Jesus, she is not making something that is small appear

as if it were larger. She is training a telescope on God. She invites us to see God as He really is. The bigger our God is, the deeper our joy.

Specifically, in verses 46-49, she is celebrating God's eyesight. He has looked on the humble estate of his servant. God's sight has fallen upon her. He has regarded her in her lowly condition and her heart is overflowing with joy. She rejoices that He is not gazing upon her in scorn or in condemnation, but in mercy and redeeming love. She sees herself as a lowly servant girl, but God, she says, is the mighty one whose name is holy.

Just about every day on my way to or from work, I see folks off to the side of the road walking with knapsacks or biking /balancing their possessions or pushing shopping carts down the sidewalks of Highway 19 or the shoulders of Homosassa Trail. Some days I am ashamed to say - I try to drive by without looking at them or thinking about them. Other days, my heart breaks, and I wonder why our society can't do better.

My heart breaks when I think about those who may be sleeping without a roof over their heads tonight. No doubt your hearts break as well. Four truths about those folks will help me not to lose sleep over their plight. Truth #1 is that unto them a Child has been born, and unto them a Son has been given. Truth #2 is that Christ loved them enough to live, suffer, and die for them. Truth #3 is that God has perfect eyesight, He sees each one of them 24 hours a day seven days a week, He knows them by Name and will never forget about them, and Truth #4 is that the Holy Spirit has called, gathered, sanctified, and sent little flocks of believers in every corner of this world, including Citrus County, for the purpose of helping and befriending them in the Name of Jesus.

### ***• God's Strength***

***And his mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts; he has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate; he has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty.***

If you're a country music fan, you know Travis Tritt, who has made a name for himself playing everything from Southern rock to bluegrass to standard country music as a performer. In an interview, Travis revealed a little known secret about his early years, where he played out of the way joints that sometimes got dangerous. One time, when a bar brawl broke out, Tritt tried something a bit

different. Just when things were getting out of hand, when bikers were reaching for their pool cues and rednecks were heading for the gun rack, he started playing and singing Silent Night. No matter what time of the year it was, as soon as he began the song, grown men would stop everything and calm down. Sometimes they would start to cry, always the peace of God seemed to win the day.

Mary would help us get Christmas right this year by helping us to see God as He is. Not only omniscient and omnipresent, but omnipotent as well. Not only does He see everything and know everything, there is nothing that is impossible for Him to do. There is no sin of yours or mine so big that He cannot cover it with His mercy. There is no failure of yours or mine so costly that His blood cannot pay for it. There is no habit of yours or mine that is so nasty that His grace cannot overpower it, and there is no lowliness of yours or mine that is so low that His love cannot raise us up, set us on our feet, and help us to take next steps.

The kingdom of God is like a congregation of believers who believe with all of their hearts that God is their refuge and their strength, a very present help in times of trouble. On their bad days, as my dad used to say, they get too big for their britches, and God and their loved ones find a way to bring them down. On their decent days, they know the thrill of exaltation as they humble themselves under the mighty hand of God. And on their good days, they go looking for that neighbor down and out and ever so frail and in need of their Savior's love.

### **• *God's Speech***

***He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his offspring forever."***

Back in the good old days, our Vacation Bible School used to sing a song called Father Abraham. There were seven verses, and I'd like us to sing all seven at this time. (Just kidding, let's just do the last one). *Father Abraham had many sons. Many sons had Father Abraham. I am one of them and so are you. So let's just praise the Lord. Right arm, left arm, right foot, left foot. Chin up, turn around, sit down*

First of all, Mary would magnify God's perfect eyesight. Secondly, His Strength that is above all others. And third, His speech.

God, you will remember, had made a covenant, a promise, to Abraham, that in his seed, all the nations of the earth would be blessed. In Galatians chapter 3, Paul explains that the seed of Abraham is not a reference to many children but to one in

particular, to Jesus Christ. In her song the Magnificat, Mary is helping us to see Jesus as the seed of Abraham. He is the focus of the covenant promise.

For thousands of years, this promise has been repeated to generation after generation. To Isaac and to Jacob and to Moses and David and to Israel, the word kept going forth, a Child is coming! A Child who would crush the serpent's head. A Child in whom all the nations would be blessed. A Child who would reign on the throne forever and of whose kingdom there would be no end.

Magnifying Jesus starts by trusting that God always keeps His promises. Having confidence that the teachings many of us have been taught from our mother's knees are inspired by God's Spirit. Believing that the Scriptures are without error and knowing beyond the shadow of a doubt that they are profitable for teaching and rebuking, able to save souls and change hearts.

The kingdom of God is like a congregation of believers who are getting Christmas right this year. They believe with all of their hearts these three truths about God. #1 - His eyesight is 20/20. #2 - His strength is the answer for every bit of frailty and weakness that rises up in their hearts and threatens to ruin their holidays. And #3 - His Word can be trusted, without reservation.

They have their bad days, their decent days, and really good days.

- On their bad days, they lose sight of the big picture, they lose perspective, and they make all kinds of mistakes.
- On their decent days, they confess their sins and the grace and mercy of God sweeps over their collective souls and rules in their hearts.
- On their really good days, by the power of the Holy Spirit, they live in such a way that the Name of Jesus is magnified. Amen